

How do I know God's will for my life?

Lionel Hartley

Special Seminars 2001 Edition

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*For that ye ought to say,
If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.
— James 4:15*

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The importance of doing God's will

Matthew 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but *he that doeth the will of my Father* which is in heaven.

Matthew 12:50 (Mark 3:35) For whosoever *shall do the will of my Father* which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

John 4:34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is *to do the will of Him that sent me*, and to finish His work.

John 9:31 Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, *and doeth his will*, him he heareth.

Ephesians 6:6 ... servants of Christ, *doing the will of God from the heart*.

Hebrews 10:7 (+ 9) Then said I, Lo, *I come ... to do thy will*, O God. 10:36 For ye have need of patience, that, *after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise*. 13:21 Make you *perfect in every good work to do his will*, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:2 That he no longer should *live the rest of his time* in the flesh to the lusts of men, but *to the will of God*.

2 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish*, but that all should come to repentance.

1 John 2:17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but *he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*. 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, *if we ask any thing according to his will*, he heareth us.

1.

I can choose to put my own will aside

Matthew 26:39 And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless *not as I will, but as thou wilt*.

John 5:30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because *I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father* which hath sent me. 6:38 For I came down from heaven, *not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me*.

John 7:16, 17 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. / *If any man will do His will*, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

Acts 18:21 18:21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, *if God will*. And he sailed from Ephesus.

Acts 21:11 -14 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. / And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. / Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. / And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, *The will of the Lord be done*.

Romans 1:10 Making request, if by any means now at length I

might have a prosperous journey *by the will of God* to come unto you. 15:32 That I may come unto you with joy *by the will of God*, and may with you be refreshed.

2 Corinthians 8:5 And this they did, *not as we hoped, but* first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us *by the will of God*.

Hebrews 6:3 And this will we do, *if God permit (If it's God's will)*.

2. I can choose not to simply go by my feelings

Proverbs 3:5 - 7 Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. / In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. / Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil. 16:25 There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

3. I can choose to study God's Word for guidance

Psalms 139:23, 24 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: / And see if there be any wicked way in me, and *lead me in the way* everlasting.

Psalms 5:8a *Lead me, O Lord*, in thy righteousness... 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

2 Timothy 2:15 *Study* to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the

word of truth.

Acts 17:11 These (the Bereans) were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and *searched the scriptures daily*, whether those things were so.

Psalms 119:24 Thy testimonies also are my delight and *my counsellors*.

Proverbs 19:21 There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless *the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand*.

Isaiah 46:9, 10 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, / Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, *My counsel shall stand*, and I will do all my pleasure:

Psalms 48:14 For this God is our God for ever and ever: *he will be our guide even unto death*.

Romans 12:1, 2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. / And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, *that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God*.

Philippians 2:13 For it is *God which worketh in you* both to will and *to do of his good pleasure (His will)*.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 For *this is the will of God*, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.

1 Peter 2:15 *For so is the will of God*, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Revelation 17:17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will...

4. **I can then choose to pray about what I have read**

John 5:39, 40 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. / And ye will not *come to me, that ye might have life.*

(Remember, God answers prayer with a *Yes*, a *No* or a *Not Yet* and the *Not Yet* is in His time - Isaiah 49:8 Thus saith the Lord, *In an acceptable time* have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages)

Colossians 1:9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, *do not cease to pray for you*, and to desire *that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will* in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always *laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*

5. **I can choose to ask God, in prayer, to reveal His will**

James 1:5,6a If any of you lack wisdom, *let him ask of God*, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. / But let him ask in faith. Proverbs 2:6 For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

Psalms 32:8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which

thou shalt go: *I will guide thee* with mine eye.

John 6:40 And *this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life:* and I will raise him up at the last day.

Ephesians 1:8, 9 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; / *Having made known unto us the mystery of his will*, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.

Ephesians 5:17-21 Wherefore be ye not unwise, *but understanding what the will of the Lord is.* / And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; / Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; / Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; / Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

6. I can choose to consider providential circumstances

Deuteronomy 8:2 And thou shalt remember *all the way which the Lord thy God led thee* these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

Psalms 16:7 I will bless the Lord, who hath *given me counsel...*
33:11 *The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever*, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. 73:24 *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel*, and afterward receive me to glory.

7. I can choose to consult Godly friends

Proverbs 25:12 What man is *he that feareth the Lord?* *him shall he teach* in the way that he shall choose. 11:14 *Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.* 15:22 *Without counsel purposes are disappointed:* but in the multitude of counsellors they are established. 19:20 *Hear counsel,* and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end. 27:9 Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth *the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.*
Psalm 1:1 Blessed is the man that *walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,* nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

8. I can choose to make a decision based on the above.

Joshua 24:15 ... *choose you this day* whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

9. I can choose to go ahead with my decision

Acts 16:9, 10 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. / *And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.*

10. I can choose to thank God for His guidance.

Our gift of thanks is our choice, Deuteronomy 22:29 *And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the Lord, offer it at your own will.*

Colossians 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, *giving thanks to God* and the Father by him.

1 Corinthians 15:57 ... *thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory* through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 2:14 *Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ,* 9:15 *Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.*

Romans 14:6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. *He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.*

Hebrews 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, *the fruit of our lips giving*

thanks to his name.

Ephesians 5:20 *Giving thanks always for all things* unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 4:6, 7 Be careful for nothing; *but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God. / And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

I Thessalonians 5:18 *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God* in Christ Jesus concerning you.

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How do I know God's will for my life? Discussion Questions

The importance of doing God's will

How can I give God my will?

"What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will.

—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 47.

1. I can choose to put my own will aside

What is the problem with (every) man's will?

A young man went into a church and started praying. He was so anxious to find God's will for his life that he took a piece of paper and wrote down all the things that he was going to do for God. Then he started to pray that God might reveal to him whether these promises were acceptable to Him.

And God impressed him with this answer: "This is not the way I want you to find My will. All I want of you is for you to sign your name and leave the paper blank for Me to fill."

2. I can choose not to simply go by my feelings

What is wrong with going by our feelings?

"The Christian should not set too high a value, or depend too much on a happy flight of feeling. These feelings are not always true guides. It should be the study of every Christian to serve God from principle, and not be ruled by feeling. By so doing, faith will be brought into exercise, and will increase."

—Ellen G White, *Testimonies Vol 1*, p161

3. I can choose to study God's Word for guidance

There are 783,137 words in the (KJV) Bible. What tools can I use to help me know where to begin?

It is better to understand a little than to misunderstand a lot

4. I can then choose to pray about what I have read

Suggest a model prayer for seeking God's will.

In Alexander Solzhenitsyn's "A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich," Ivan endures all the horrors of a Soviet prison camp. One day he is praying with his eyes closed when a fellow prisoner notices him and says with ridicule, "Prayers won't help you get out of here any faster." Opening his eyes, Ivan answers, "I do not pray to get out of prison but to do the will of God."

5. I can choose to ask God, in prayer, to reveal His will

What are some of the words I will use?

When Magdalene, the 14-year-old daughter of Martin Luther, lay sick unto death, her father prayed: "Lord, I love her very much and should like to keep her, but, dear Lord, if it is Thy will to take her away, I am glad to know that she will be with Thee.

6. I can choose to consider providential circumstances

Discuss at least one way that you have seen God working in your life in the past.

It was William Carey, the founder of modern missions, who said, "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God."

7. I can choose to consult Godly friends

Name 3 friends you could ask for wisdom. Now name one you will ask next time you need direction.

Be grateful for the doors of opportunity - and for friends who oil the hinges.

—Anon, Adventist Review, Feb 8, 2003, p31

8. I can choose to make a decision based on the above.

Summarise what the steps are to choosing God's will.

The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centred upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him."

—Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, p. 47.

9. I can choose to go ahead with my decision

What are some of the things that may prevent me from making a decision based on God's will rather than my own?

A decision is made with the brain. A commitment is made with the heart. Therefore a commitment is much deeper and binding than a decision.

Anon, South Pacific Record, Signs Publishing, Warburton, Vic, Australia, September 22, 2007, p15

10. I can choose to thank God for His guidance.

Suggest a model prayer of gratitude (avoid the cliché "Thank You for...").

"Gratitude is what always spoils life when it is left out."

— Notes —